

CONNEXUS

A Magazine for Alberta Government Managers

Summer 2001 Edition

INSIDE



2001 Premier's
Award of Excellence

Page 2

Protection Against
Family Violence
(PAFV) Act

Page 4

Employee Assistance
Program

Page 6

Alberta Queen's
Printer Bookstore in
Edmonton has
Moved!

Page 7



Alberta SuperNet
responds...

Page 7

PLUS MUCH MORE...

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Office Web site

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connexus](http://www.gov.ab.ca/pao/connexus)

Winning Gold...

Alberta Public Service employees win gold

**The Alberta government
has been awarded top
honours by the Institute
of Public Administration
of Canada (IPAC).**

**The Deputy Minister's
Committee of the Alberta
Public Service won the Gold
medal of the prestigious
IPAC Award for Innovative
Management.**

With a theme of "Developing the Public Service of Tomorrow", Alberta's Corporate Human Resource Development strategy beat out 100 submissions from across the country.

The strategy is an innovative approach to meeting the human resource needs of the Alberta public service: develop the leadership capability of all employees, particularly the management group; promote learning across the public service, with a focus on succession planning; and promotion of the Alberta public service as an attractive employer. "The Corporate Human Resource Development

Strategy has been successful largely due to the ongoing commitment of Jim Dixon, Public Service Commissioner and the Deputy Minister's Committee," says Julian Nowicki, Deputy Minister, Executive Council. "We are extremely proud of this achievement as it illustrates how all departments can achieve excellent results by working together."

"The Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy has been successful largely due to the ongoing commitment of Jim Dixon, Public Service Commissioner and the Deputy Minister's Committee,"

Government of Alberta

**2001 IPAC
Gold Award**
for Innovative
Management



The Alberta government is allowed to use the IPAC Gold Award logo for the next three years. Please contact Cathy Housdorff, Assistant Director, Communications, PAO, 408-8476, for more information.

The Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy has brought consistency and focus to human resource planning across the provincial government. Employee satisfaction has climbed to 85 % in 2000 from 68% in 1997. Other Canadian jurisdictions also find themselves facing the loss of corporate memory and experience and these jurisdictions are looking to the Alberta approach. ■

Julian Nowicki, Deputy Minister, Executive Council

CONNEXUS

is published in print and online by the Personnel Administration Office. Its purpose is to keep managers in the Alberta public service informed about current policies, goals and programs.

It serves to provide managers with information to assist in their individual development and that of the Alberta public service.

The views expressed in **CONNEXUS** are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Personnel Administration Office, nor does publishing them imply endorsement. The editorial policy for this magazine is set out in a document approved by the Public Service Commissioner. A copy can be obtained from the Editor.

Readers' comments and suggestions are welcome and should be sent to:

Editor
CONNEXUS
7th Floor
Peace Hills Trust Tower
10011 - 109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3S8
Fax: (780) 422-5428

EDITORIAL
BOARD**Cathy Housdorff**

Assistant Director, Communications
Personnel Administration Office
cathy.housdorff@gov.ab.ca

Elizabeth Jones

Communications Assistant
Public Service Commissioner's Office

Brigitte Fulgham

Executive Director, Human
Resources, Infrastructure

Sanda Gheorghiu

Director, Healthcare Products and
Services, Economic Development

Mat Hanrahan

Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning

James McLaughlin

Director, Southern Region, Justice

Alberta
PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE

Alberta's Public Service Employees World Class

2001 Premier's Award of Excellence honours 27 teams

While most Albertans had to wait until August to catch some world class talent at the much anticipated World Championships in Athletics, 1,500 Albertans gathered in June to salute world class talent of a different kind.

On Monday, June 18th, the Eighth Annual Premier's Award of Excellence was held at the Jubilee Auditorium. Hosted by Global TV's Lynda Steele, the ceremony recognized members of 27 public service teams who demonstrated excellence in client service and business practices. Premier Ralph Klein was on hand to do the honours, presenting two gold, 11 silver and 14 bronze awards to team representatives.

Since 1994, teams from across government have submitted a wide variety of projects to be considered for an award. This year's submissions were typically diverse, highlighting the work of teams whose efforts ranged from improving air quality, to implementing new computer systems, to delivering better services to seniors. One team worked to showcase Alberta in Germany. Another team created a program to support displaced workers and their families after a mine closure.

Two teams received gold awards this year. Community Development's Anno Domini: Jesus Through the Centuries, received a gold award for a three-month exhibition which brought 113,000 visitors to the Provincial Museum. The second gold award went to Economic Development for their participation in Globe 2000, and the team's success in showcasing Alberta's environmental capabilities at this international trade fair on the environment.

Out of 48 submissions received, over half earned an award. The feat of receiving an award is not as



easy as it might seem, however. If anything, the competition has become more intense over the years. According to Wendy Antoniuk, Coordinator for the Premier's Award of Excellence program, "A lot of effort goes into making a submission for the Premier's Award of Excellence and each year the quality of submissions seems to improve." The number of submissions this year indicates that teams are up for the challenge. And they're proud of their work.

"Recognition for the excellent service we try to provide Albertans is the biggest benefit," says Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Team Leader for Municipal Affairs' Fire Safety Initiatives Directed at Alberta Children project. This year, Wijayasinghe's team received a bronze award.

Mike Pearson, part of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's silver award winning Employee Recognition Team, concurs. "Receiving the award confirms the value of having a strong departmental level employee recognition program," says Pearson. "The award also provides us with an opportunity to share our program's results with other ministries."

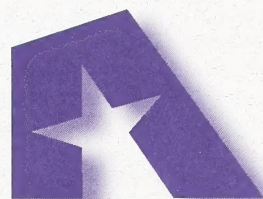
Pearson credits support for the team as one of the secrets behind his team's success. "We feel fortunate that the program has always enjoyed the whole-hearted support of our current and former Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Executive Committee and senior management," says Pearson. This ongoing support, combined with a spirit of teamwork helps to solidify working relationships among team members.

Although the majority of award recipients were teams brought together for specific projects, five awards went to "natural work teams" – teams that continue to work together even though the project has been completed. "It's great to have these five teams as award winners," says Ruth Hofer, Manager of Staffing and Workforce Development with the Personnel Administration Office. "The excellent business practices that these teams employ in their day to day work, and the results they achieve on an ongoing basis, provide a wonderful example for all of us."

"The excellent business practices that these teams employ in their day to day work, and the results they achieve on an ongoing basis, provide a wonderful example for all of us."

Ruth Hofer, Manager of Staffing and Workforce Development, Personnel Administration Office

Like the World Championships in Athletics – which puts the spotlight on high athletic achievers – the Premier's Award of Excellence highlights the successes of some of Alberta's most committed, hard working public service employees. Behind the scenes, the dedication and expertise that put these teams on the podium continues every day. ■



Left:
Dr. W. Bruce McGillivray accepts the Gold Award for Anno Domini: Jesus Through The Centuries from Premier Ralph Klein.

Above:
Team Globe 2000: Exporting Alberta's Environmental Advantage pose with Premier Ralph Klein prior to accepting their Gold Award.

Teamwork Works...

Cross-Ministry Initiative Outstanding

Police officers are saying the new Protection Against Family Violence (PAFV) Act has given hope to victims of family violence and provides them another meaningful tool to stop abuse.

The Act came into effect on June 1, 1999. It helps reduce incidents of family violence in Alberta through three types of protection: emergency protection orders, Queen's Bench protection orders and warrants permitting entry. Preliminary impact of the legislation indicates there has been progress toward increased awareness of family violence issues, changes in attitude and reduced family violence behavior.

How the Act became a reality is a testament to the outstanding co-operation, teamwork and drive of government working alongside its community partners. This is their story.

The journey along the long road to implementation began when the Alberta government initiated a public consultation process in July 1997, led by then Calgary-Currie MLA Jocelyn Burgener. Burgener was assisted in the process by Jane Holliday, director of the office for the prevention of family violence and by Geoff Ho, Q.C., a lawyer who has been responsible for developing major pieces of legislation in Alberta and who is also director of strategic initiatives for the court services division of Alberta Justice. Holliday, well-known nationally for her expertise in the area of family violence, is chair of the Alberta interdepartmental committee on family violence, a committee made up of 11 different ministries.

As part of the public consultation process, a discussion paper outlining key family violence protection issues was distributed to 300 citizens and advocacy groups. More than 120 responses were received and comments were compiled into a consultation report. Recommendations were forwarded to the Community Services standing policy com-

mittee for review. Legislation was drafted and reviewed by caucus before the Act was passed in the spring 1998 sitting of the Legislature.

How did the Act arrive at its final destination? The interdepartmental committee was charged with the implementation process and committee members had much work to do before the PAFV law came into effect. In order for the Act to be effective, police departments, community organizations, courts and service providers throughout Alberta had to be involved. Implementation activities included training municipal police, RCMP and aboriginal police; conducting community information sessions

"I'm so proud of the whole team. They are people who worked together for a common goal and went way above the call of duty..."

Jane Holliday,
Director of the office for the prevention
of family violence

throughout Alberta for local service providers; developing, monitoring and evaluating mechanisms to determine the Act's effectiveness; addressing the needs of isolated communities, First Nations and Metis people, cultural minorities, the deaf and blind communities so they could access protections offered by the Act; developing regulations and procedures; and communicating information to clients and stakeholders.

"Albertans should be protected from violence, especially in their own homes where they should feel the safest," said Paul Bourque, Q.C., former deputy minister of Justice and deputy attorney general. "The time and effort put in by police, staff and community groups were key to making this Act a reality."

Paula Tyler, deputy minister of Children's Services, knew a massive amount of work would be necessary before the Act would take shape in Alberta communities. "Bringing a piece of legislation from the paper stage to become a living regulation is a major undertaking. I knew our office for the prevention of family violence has worked with other ministries for the past 15 years so their ability to implement this Act would be achievable," she said.

Eight subcommittees with 16 co-chairs from across government were set up to involve the identified groups. Each subcommittee had one co-chair who was a member of the interdepartmental committee on family violence. Working groups then spun off from the subcommittees.

The interdepartmental committee met monthly except for the summer, and the subcommittees got together as needed – sometimes weekly or bi-weekly. They reported to then Justice Minister Jon Havelock throughout the implementation process and after the Act was implemented they reported to Children's Services Minister Iris Evans.

"I'm so proud of the whole team. They are people who worked together for a common goal and went way above the call of duty," says Holliday. "We had worked together since 1984 when we were asked to create a government-wide strategy to address the



Jane Holliday, Director of the office for the prevention of family violence and Geoff Ho

issue of family violence. Because we'd all been together through the years we had a really strong sense of trust developed."

Ho agrees. "The continuing commitment and support of ministers, deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers throughout the project was not only valuable, it was essential. Jocelyn Burgener provided excellent leadership and Jane galvanized members of the interdepartmental committee. Representatives from all ministries were extremely dedicated and

worked in partnership with people in the community, with service providers, the courts and the police. The end result was legislation that gives police additional tools to protect victims of family violence in Alberta."

The work of the interdepartmental committee to implement the new Protection Against Family Violence Act was recognized with a 2001 Premier's Award of Excellence Silver Award. ■

"Bringing a piece of legislation from the paper stage to become a living regulation is a major undertaking. I knew our office for the prevention of family violence has worked with other ministries for the past 15 years so their ability to implement this Act would be achievable,..."

Paula Tyler,
Deputy Minister of Children's Services

Management Programs vital piece of continuous learning

"One of our priorities is to continue to keep the Alberta public service the most effective, efficient and economical in the country. Both the Senior and Executive Managers' Development Program and the Management Development Program are important elements in reaching our goal by enhancing career growth based on effective leadership skills. These programs are valuable tools to help us stay on top of trends, prepare for the future and meet the challenges ahead. I highly recommend them."

Julian Nowicki
Deputy Minister of Executive Council

Milestones were reached in 2000/2001 for both the Senior and Executive Managers' Development Program (SEMDP) and the Management Development Program (MDP). Forty graduates of SEMDP made it the largest graduating class in its' 14 year history, and 24 managers graduated from the first-ever MDP. Both programs have a base successful associations with the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Business. This partnership is strengthened by commitment of the Deputy Minister's Committee and a focus on programs that deal with the real issues facing the Alberta public service today.

For the Alberta public service to be successful in the future and move forward during times of change and innovation, continuous learning is vital. APS managers continue to demonstrate a commitment and dedication to pursuing formal educational training. Graduates of both programs are helping to keep these programs in the forefront of executive development in Canada.

Congratulations to John Enns for BSAM Award

John Enns, Regional Director, South, Property Management, Alberta Infrastructure, was honoured recently with the Robert A. Willson Award at the closing ceremonies for the 88th Session of the Banff School of Advanced Management.

Created in 1969, the award is named for Robert A. Willson, a professor, Academic Dean and Chairman of the Board of BSAM in the 1950's and '60's. It is awarded to individuals who make significant contributions to the promotion and spirit of BSAM and to executive education.

John has served on the Board of the Banff School of Advanced Management and made meaningful contributions to the BSAM Alumni Association, including Edmonton Alumni Chapter President for several years, as well as President of the

National Association. He was pivotal in staging three BSAM International Conferences and has served on numerous Alumni committees. In meetings, John's ability to encourage wide ranging discussions and then succinctly sum up the proceedings was always much appreciated. John is the sixth recipient of the award. Congratulations, John.

Helping employees lead healthy and productive lives

Pressures associated with one's job, career decisions, the work environment, or personal problems such as relationship or family problems can be, at times overwhelming. Whatever the cause, stress can be difficult to handle and can sometimes lead to serious medical problems.

The Employee Assistance Program is a confidential, free service available to help Alberta public service employees and their immediate family members lead healthy and productive lives.

"One of the most common questions people have before accessing our services is the issue of confidentiality," says Arnie Mazo, Employee Assistance Program Manager. "The EAP services are strictly confidential. No information is released to anyone without written permission from the employee or when required by law." Some employees are concerned that counseling information would be placed on their personnel file.

"That simply doesn't happen, except when the employee gives permission or under the legal circumstances I previously spoke of," adds Mazo.

For information and assistance, call (780) 408-8455 in Edmonton, or (403) 297-3358 in Calgary.

The services available include:

- Help with personal/emotional concerns, including stress, relationship issues, depression, anxiety, addictions, compulsive gambling and anger management problems.
- Consultants provide professional assessment and referral to a community agency or other resources when appropriate.
- Psychological debriefing to deal with traumatic events in the workplace.
- Group problem-solving services to deal with problems in the workplace.
- Consultation and advice to supervisors, managers and human resource consultants dealing with employees whose performance has been affected by personal, emotional or stress-related problems.
- Assistance with the integration of employees returning to work after a period of leave due to emotional difficulties.
- Assistance with departmental wellness programs and/or educational sessions on behavioural health topics.

Alberta Queen's Printer Bookstore in Edmonton has Moved!

After many years at its home on Kingsway Avenue, the Alberta Queen's Printer Bookstore in Edmonton has relocated to the downtown core.

The new address is:
Main Floor, Park Plaza Building
10611 - 98 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2P7

FREE PARKING is available on 107th Street.

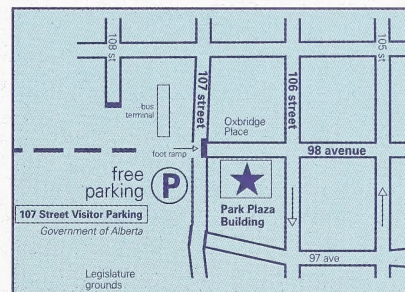
Our telephone (780-427-4952), fax (780-452-0668), and email (qp@gov.ab.ca) remain the same, as does our Calgary bookstore address.

So why not come and visit us at our new location today and... discover everything Alberta Queen's Printer has to offer!

Our services include:

- **Publishing Alberta's Legislation**
Alberta Queen's Printer publishes, distributes and sells Alberta's Acts, Regulations and various legislation-related materials, offered on paper, CD ROM and online, with many available for downloading.
- **Alberta Gazette**
Published twice a month.
- **Publishing and distributing government department material**
- **Administering Crown Copyright of Statutes and Regulations**
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Ensures free public access to Alberta government publications and legislation through the province's public library system.

Want more information on the Alberta Queen's Printer?
 Please contact Sheldon
 D. Staszko at (780) 422-5647 or
 sheldon.staszko@gov.ab.ca.



Alberta SuperNet responds to *Get Ready Alberta*

Within three years, Alberta will be the first jurisdiction in North America to ensure that citizens, schools, hospitals, libraries and provincial government offices have access to affordable, high-speed, broadband Internet.

As part of four key areas identified in Information and Communications Technology: A Strategy for Alberta, Alberta SuperNet will provide better access to leading edge technologies and the Internet in response to today's knowledge-based economy. Soon high-speed, residential Internet services will be available in 422 communities, as compared to 30 communities today, providing

an environment and culture of technology use for education, economic development and enhancing quality of life for all Albertans.

The contracts for Alberta SuperNet were signed on July 24th by Innovation and Science Minister Victor Doerksen and representatives from Bell Intrigna and Axia IP Services.





Traffic on AGent portal gives thumbs up to employee self service

Members of the Alberta public service are really taking to on-line employee self service. "We set out to design a portal and employee self-service tool that was easy to access, easy to understand, and easy to navigate. Our efforts are validated as employees with varied levels of technical skill and experience tell us that the site is convenient and easy to use," said Alma Walden, acting AGent Project Director.

"Traffic through the portal has naturally picked up over time. In 2000 we averaged 278 visits per day and by the end of March 2001 we were up to more than 600," noted Walden. "Since April 24, employees have been able to update their own basic personal information through AGent. In the very first week, more than 1,000 employees made almost 3,500 changes, saving processing time, and significantly enhancing the completeness of information in the IMAGIS HRMS database," explained Walden.

On-line 1st Choice Benefits Selection Successful

June 18 to July 11 was benefits choice time for management and excluded/opted-out employees. This year, for the first time, all those with internet access used *My Employment Information* on the AGent portal to exercise their Choice Time benefits selections. More than 1,100 benefit selections were changed online - that's more than 87% of all the changes that took place during choice time.

What's Next?

The AGent team is now working on the next stage, which will allow employees to update more of their personal and employment information online. Watch for it before Christmas.

Check it out at
www.agent.gov.ab.ca

The AGent portal is the gateway to employee self-service for the Alberta Public Service.
AGent - Your window to more convenience, more access, more control.

ExClaim!²

ExClaim!² project team redesigns on-line expense claim tool

The pilot of ExClaim, our on-line expense claim tool, wrapped up at the end of April. Since then, a new ExClaim!² project team has been building an improved tool to meet users' needs and expectations. Specifically, the team's mandate is to improve:

- ExClaim's functionality - tackle the difficulties users had with navigation, and fix the "bugs" that had been identified.
- ExClaim's performance - address the frequent pauses that had been occurring when claimants entered data into a new on-line claim. This had been particularly disruptive to remote users accessing ExClaim through slower network connections.
- User efficiency - in some cases ExClaim had been more time consuming to use than the processes it was designed to replace, and not living up to the promise of more convenience, more access and more control through employee self service.

Rob Schneider, from Innovation & Science, is heading up the project, with a project team of contract specialists and Alberta public service employees who have been seconded to work on the project:

- Denyce Deters, ACSC
- Debbie Ross, Infrastructure
- Bob Brickman, Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
- Mary Ann Roque, Energy
- Carey Stewart, ACSC
- Clem Benoit, Innovation & Science
- Larry Jensen, Economic Development



Focus Groups improve ExClaim!² design

The ExClaim!² project team has completed the requirements and design stages of their work. Fifty-eight employees from across government participated in focus group sessions held June 20, 21 and 22 to view and comment on the proposed design.

Positive feedback on the prototypes has been used to turn the improved design into an on-line reality. In addition to actually building the improved system so that it's as easy-to-use and as efficient as possible, team members are developing test scripts that will be used to ensure the system works the way it should, developing the reports that ExClaim!² will be able to produce, and creating training materials. The project is on schedule for final testing by some users in September with rollout to Ministries to begin in October.

Watch for
ExClaim!²
Coming to a
computer near
you this fall.

ExClaim!²

To change your mailing label address, please correct and return it to the payroll area of your department's human resources office for update in the IMAGIS database.